NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6053 AUGUST 3, 1978
DOUGLAS ROBERTS/MID EAST BUREAU

TERRORIST FEUD -- INTENSIFYING

ANNCR:

THE RECENT EPATE OF TERRORIST ATTACKS IN SEVERAL MAJOR CITIES POINT TO AN INTER-ARAB FEUD OF GROWING PROPORTIONS. DOUGLAS ROBERTS HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM THE VOA'S MIDDLE EAST BUREAU:

VOICE:

IT IS A MURKY SORT OF UNDERCOVER WAR, AND FEW ANALYSTS PRETEND TO KNOW ALL THE DETAILS. BUT IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, A BLOODY ROUND OF ATTACKS AND COUNTER ATTACKS BY ARA GUNMEN HAS LEFT A GROWING NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IN THE STREETS OF LONDON, PARIS, BEIRUT AND OTHER CITIES. AND THE FEUD APPEARS TO BE INTENSIFYING.

VARIOUS PALESTINIAN FACTIONS ARE CLEARLY INVOLVED IN THE UNDERGROUND WARFARE, THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ HAS BEEN IMPLICATED, AND THERE ARE ENOUGH FREE-LANCE ARAB GUNMEN TO ADD TO THE CONFUSION. ONE OF THE BASIC QUARRELS IN THIS MANY-SIDED FEUD IS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ AND THE MAINSTREAM FACTION OF THE P-L-O, THE AL FATAH GUERRILLA GROUP LED BY YASIR ARAFAT. MISTER ARAFAT'S SUPPORTERS BLAMED IRAQ FOR THE ASSASSINATIONS EARLIER THIS YEAR OF P-L-O REPRESENTATIVES IN LONDON AND KUWAIT AND AL FATAH IS ALSO LIKELY TO HOLD BAGHDAD RESPONSIBLE FOR THURSDAY'S MURDER OF THE P-L-O'S PARIS REPRESENTATIVE. THIS CAME HARD ON THE HEELS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS ON THE IRAQI EMBASSIES IN PARIS AND LONDON, A SHOOTOUT AT THE IRAQI CONSULATE IN KARACHI, AND AN ATTACK ON THE IRAQI AMBASSADOR'S CAR IN BEIRUT.

BUT THIS IS ONLY PART OF THE EQUATION. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN CLASHES BETWEEN MISTER ARAFAT'S SUPPORTERS AND

PRO-IRAQI PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS IN THREE MAJOR LEBANESE CITIES. ARAB ANALYSTS IN BEIRUT SAY THERE IS CONSIDERABLE TENSION WITHIN PALESTINIAN RANKS THERE. CLEARLY SUPPORTING AL FATAH AND THE MAINSTREAM P-L-O LEADERSHIP IS THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA. THIS IS HARDLY SURPRISING IN VIEW OF THE LONG-STANDING FEUD BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND THE BAGHDAD GOVERNMENT OVER BOTH IDEOLOGY FOR THE ARAB BAATH PARTY AND ARAB POLICY IN THE CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL. THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE BLAMED EACH OTHER FOR REPEATED TERRORIST ATTACKS IN DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS.

THE QUARREL WAS TAKEN ONE STEP FURTHER IN THE WAKE OF PRESIDENT ANWAR SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM LAST NOVEMBER. WHILE BOTH SYRIA AND IRAQ CONDEMNED THE EGYPTIAN LEADER'S TACTICS, THEY COULD NOT AGREE ON WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN. AND AS A RESULT IRAQ FAILED TO JOIN SYRIA IN THE ALLIANCE WITH THREE OTHER ARAB STATES AND THE P-L-O TO OPPOSE MISTER SADAT'S MOVES. BUT OF FAR MORE CONCERN TO A GROWING NUMBER OF EUROPEAN POLICEMEN ARE THE GUN BATTLES, BOMBINGS AND ASSASSINATIONS IN LONDON AND PARIS. BOTH BRITAIN AND FRANCE HAVE EXPELLED IRAQI DIPLOMATS OVER THE PAST WEEK. THIS HAS SO FAR FAILED TO CURB THE VIOLENCE. BUT THE POTENTIAL FOR BLOODSHED IS GREATER STILL IN LEBANON WHERE VIRTUALLY ALL THE GUERRILLA GROUPS ARE ARMED TO THE TEETH. AND MOST OBSERVERS SEE THIS AS YET ANOTHER BURDEN FOR LEBANON'S LEADERS, ALREADY BELEAGUERED BY A HOST OF CONFLICTS AND INTERNECINE FEUDS THAT HAVE KEPT THE COUNTRY IN AN ALL BUT CONSTANT STATE OF UNREST FOR WELL OVER THREE YEARS.

WJL/PY